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Historiography of the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk epochs

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As is evident from other chapters of this volume it would be artificial and misleading to try to separate the history of Islamic Egypt from that of its neighbors, especially Syria and Palestine. After all, the geopolitical situation of Egypt throughout the Middle Ages dictated both the necessity to defend its right flank from encroachments by rival powers in Syria and, to a lesser extent, Mesopotamia, and to secure its commercial interests in the Mediterranean through control of the ports of the Levant. These geopolitical factors were not of course peculiar to the Islamic period and are recurring themes of both ancient and modern times. That being the case, it is not surprising that it is also impractical to confine the historiography of the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk periods to writing about Egypt alone or to those composed by Egyptian authors. Although historians resident in Egypt became more and more prominent in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and an Egyptian group of writers flourished in Cairo during the fifteenth century, for the whole of the Ayyūbid period, Syrian and Mesopotamian authors dominated what was recorded about Egypt. Since, moreover, the Egyptian Ayyūbid sultans, including Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, were involved with building and maintaining an empire with its capital in Cairo but including Syria, Palestine, and other territories, there is no history focusing on Ayyūbid Egypt per se, so that it must be studied as a part of Ayyūbid history in general.

Nevertheless, before examining the historiography of each era separately, it should be useful to ask whether the two periods have any features in common. From the point of view of historiographical genres, the answer is simple: the classical forms of Arabic historical writing were maintained by both Ayyūbid and Mamlūk writers, most notably chronicles and biographies (including biographies of individual personages and biographical dictionaries), but also administrative manuals, though the latter were not used with the same frequency and consistency in both periods. In general, then, the external forms of historiography are marked by conservatism, as is the

content, which deals by and large with the activities of the political elites at their courts, in diplomacy, and on battlefields, along with the roles of intellectuals, including religious scholars and mystics, but also the literati, in the life of the times. To a great extent this element of conservatism can be explained by the fact that the historians of both periods had similar backgrounds and were formed by similar influences. Although important exceptions will be noted for the Mamlūk period, basically two types of historians dominated the field for almost 350 years: officials, mainly bureaucrats of both high and low rank, who had access to rulers and/or official documents, and religious scholars, that is *'ulamā'*. The two groups were certainly not mutually exclusive, for most if not all of the former would have had some exposure in the course of their education to the art and science of *ḥadīth* and its transmitters, which continued to influence scholarly historiography from its inception to the time in question. On the other hand many of the *'ulamā'* served in some official capacity or another associated with judicial institutions.

But despite the maintenance of the centuries-old Arabic traditions governing the forms of historical discourse, the historians of our periods have other distinctive characteristics in common. This at least is one thesis, in which it is argued that from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries a new type of historiography developed and flourished, namely "*siyasa*-oriented historiography,"¹ that is to say historiography without the degree of concern for epistemological and theological implications that had characterized previous works, and with increased emphasis on issues related to the governance of Muslim states. This new orientation, culminating in the Mamlūk "imperial bureaucratic chronicle," resulted in increased reliance on archives and records of various kinds, in an effort not just to lend authenticity to the historical narrative but to expand the subject matter of history to include economic and social processes.² Concomitantly, interest in biography became more and more pervasive as historians scrutinized the lives of the governing class and their extended entourages in order to delve more deeply into the day-to-day workings of medieval Muslim principalities. In this respect the *'ulamā'* figure more prominently in the chronicles than had previously been the case, reflecting the fact that the ruling military oligarchies, beginning with the Seljuks but continuing under the Ayyubids and especially the Mamlūks, seeking legitimacy through the support of intellectuals, spent enormous sums on their salaries and patronage, sometimes in return for specific services to the court but often for their function as devotional and educational intermediaries with the public. In addition to the proliferation of biographical works, it has been noted that historians

¹ Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (Cambridge, 1994), 184.

² *Ibid.*, 183.

frequently inserted autobiographical remarks in their narratives, sometimes in the form of moral pronouncements on the conduct of the rulers and their supporters, but more often as casual personal observations. In this respect the emphasis of the bureaucrat historians on *siyāsa* inevitably produced a reaction from historians who deplored the usurpation, both in theory and practice, of the supremacy of the *sharī'a* in governing and maintaining the state, and advocated a return to it as a remedy for the ills of society.³

A final general point needs to be stressed. As is the case with Muslim historiography from the beginning up until the Ottomans in their heyday, virtually no archives have survived. As noted above, historians did occasionally make use of them and sometimes reproduced documents in their texts; it is also true that fragments of chancery and judicial institutions have survived, especially from the Mamlūk period, which historians have recently begun to put to good use.⁴ But the fact remains that our knowledge of both Ayyubid and Mamlūk history is based mainly on literary sources. In the following pages only the most important of these will be surveyed.

The historians of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and their successors

Given the renown of the founder of the Ayyūbid dynasty in the east and the west, it is not surprising that the sources for his life and career are numerous and that these have been extensively studied by western scholars. As a result of the research of H. A. R. Gibb and others the character of these works and their interrelationship are probably as well known as any for the medieval period of Arabic historiography.⁵ Basically there are four major authors, one of whom, Ibn al-Athīr, can be classified as a scholar historian, while the others were bureaucrats.

ʿIzz al-Dīn ʿAlī ibn al-Athīr (555–630/1160–1233), a contemporary of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, was born and raised in a small town north of Mosul; in this area he was educated, primarily as a student of *ḥadīth*. Apparently he never held a professional position but remained a private scholar all his life, although he is said to have received the patronage of the atabegs of Mosul and Aleppo. He is also known to have been with Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's army in an unknown capacity on one or more campaigns against the crusaders in Syria.⁶ Although Ibn al-Athīr edited two works related to the science of tradition, his fame rests on his two

³ *Ibid.*, 200–02.

⁴ For references see D. Little, "The Use of Documents for the Study of Mamluk History," *Mamlūk Studies Review*, 1 (1997), 6–12.

⁵ See H. A. R. Gibb, "The Arabic sources for the Life of Saladin," *Speculum*, 25 (1950), 58–72, and other works cited below.

⁶ D. Richards, "Ibn al-Athīr and the Later Parts of the *Kāmil*: A Study of Aims and Methods," in D. Morgan (ed.), *Medieval Historical Writing in the Christian and Islamic Worlds* (London, 1982), 77.

histories. His voluminous universal history, *al-Kāmil fī al-Ta'rikh* (*The Perfection of History*), which begins with the Creation and runs to 628/1231, was celebrated by his contemporary Ibn Khallikān "as one of the best productions of its kind."⁷ In modern times, Ibn al-Athīr has been acclaimed on the basis of this work as "the only real Arab historian of the period" and "the chief historian of the later crusades."⁸ For the events prior to his own lifetime Ibn al-Athīr depended most notably on al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'rikh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk* (*History of the Prophets and Kings*), which he used freely. Besides passages borrowed from works that have not survived in their original form, *al-Kāmil* is interesting primarily for the events of Ibn al-Athīr's own lifetime and the years immediately preceding it, for which he could draw on reports from his father and other eyewitnesses, as well as written sources. These sources are unidentified more often than not. This reluctance to name his sources consistently seems odd for a scholar with training in *ḥadīth* and has been explained as a conscious attempt "to free himself from the Traditionist method followed by his favorite historian, al-Ṭabarī, and by his contemporary Ibn 'Asākir."⁹ Ibn al-Athīr's second history, *al-Bāhir fī Ta'rikh Atābakāt al-Mawṣil* (*The Dazzling History of the Atabegs of Mosul*), is a local history of the Zengids but includes information on their relations with Egypt. It surveys the years 477–607/1084–1210 and thus covers a century and a quarter recorded also in *al-Kāmil*. Given the fact that the author enjoyed the favor of the Atabegs of Mosul, it is natural that he eulogized them in both of his works and deprecated their enemies, most notably Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn himself. Accordingly in most circles he is regarded as a prejudicial and unreliable source for the career of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. More damaging to Ibn al-Athīr's reputation as a historian is Gibb's finding that he relied heavily, even for contemporary events, on the work of his fellow historian 'Imād al-Dīn, rewriting his reports "with an occasional twist or admixture of fiction,"¹⁰ and reminding his readers of God's direction of human affairs.

The main value of Ibn al-Athīr's two histories rests on his account of the period following Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's death. In fact, for the reign of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's nephew, al-Malik al-Kāmil, as sultan of Egypt and Syria (615–35/1218–38), Ibn al-Athīr has been characterized as "the soundest basis of our knowledge."¹¹ Nevertheless, even for earlier periods he was regarded

⁷ Ibn Khallikān's *Biographical Dictionary Translated from the Arabic by Baron MacGuckin de Slane*, 2 (Paris and London, 1843), 289.

⁸ F. Gabrieli, *Arab Historians of the Crusades* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969), xxvii, xxviii.

⁹ M. Ahmad, "Some Notes on Arabic Historiography during the Zengid and Ayyubid periods (521/1127–648/1250)," in B. Lewis and P. Holt (eds.), *Historians of the Middle East* (London, 1962), 90.

¹⁰ H. A. R. Gibb, "The Achievement of Saladin," in Yusuf Ibhish (ed.), *Studies in Islamic History* (Beirut, 1974), 159.

¹¹ H. Gottschalk, *Al-Malik al-Kāmil von Egypten und seine Zeit* (Wiesbaden, 1948), 6.

as authoritative by the many later historians who borrowed from him, including Abū al-Fidā', Ibn Kathīr, al-Maqrīzī, and Ibn Khaldūn.

Like Ibn al-Athīr, Bahā' al-Dīn ibn Shaddād (539–632/1145–1235) was a native of Mesopotamia and was educated there as a scholar; unlike Ibn al-Athīr, he held various professional appointments as *madrassa* professor, diplomat of the Zangids of Mosul, and judge. Under Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn he held an important position as *Qāḍī al-'Askar* (Judge of the Army). After Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's death Ibn Shaddād served the sultan's surviving sons in Aleppo, one of whom, al-Malik al-Zāhir, appointed him Shāfi'i judge of that city. On the basis of his five-year experience in the company of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, Ibn Shaddād composed a biographical study of the sultan, *al-Nawādir al-Sultāniyya wa-al-Mahāsin al-Yūsufiyya* (*Royal Anecdotes and Joseph-like Virtues*). The work is considered to be a sober and authoritative portrait of the sultan despite the author's patent admiration for his subject. In form it is not a conventional biography, being divided into the two parts reflected in the title. The first section is devoted to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's virtues, wherein Yūsuf (i.e. Joseph), refers not only to the sultan's given name (Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf) but evokes associations with the biblical Joseph's career in Egypt. In a series of chapters, each beginning with a *ḥadīth* or a verse from the Qur'an in order to link Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's life with the Prophet Muḥammad's, Ibn Shaddād delineates the sultan's merits, such as justice, generosity, courage, militant zeal, steadfastness, humaneness, and so on. Appropriate anecdotes to illustrate Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's embodiment of Muslim heroic virtues are narrated in the form of the author's eyewitness accounts. Here Ibn Shaddād's purpose is not just to eulogize the ideal ruler but also to establish Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn as an exemplar worthy of his subjects' emulation. In the second part the author turns to a record of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's career from his foray into Egypt in 559/1164 until his death in 589/1193. Although the organization of this section is chronological, it is not annalistic. The most valuable segment is inevitably that covering the years when Ibn Shaddād was in Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's service. The work is regarded as an authentic record of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's deeds during the Third Crusade, thanks largely to Ibn Shaddād's close, but not fawning, relationship with the sultan.¹²

Two other historians enjoyed Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's confidence as official members of his retinue. The first of these, 'Imād al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Kātib al-Isfāhānī (519–597/1125–1201), is unique as the only non-Arab historian of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. Born in Isfahan and reared in Kashan, he received a *madrassa* education in Sāljuk Baghdad and later taught jurisprudence there under the patronage of the Zangid Sultan Nūr al-Dīn. After the death of Nūr al-Dīn, 'Imād al-Dīn fell out of official favor for a short time but regained it in 570/1175 when Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, campaigning in northern Syria, responded to a

¹² Gabrieli, *Arab Historians*, xxix.

poem written by ‘Imād al-Dīn in his honor by appointing him as a deputy scribe (*kātib*) to al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil, a high official in Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn’s service, and, coincidentally, the second “official” historian alluded to above. In this capacity ‘Imād al-Dīn drafted much official correspondence on behalf of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and gained close and frequent access to the sultan and affairs of state. Both the correspondence and ‘Imād al-Dīn’s first-hand knowledge figure prominently in his two histories: *al-Faṭḥ al-Qusṣī fī al-Faṭḥ al-Qudsī* (*Eloquent Rhetoric on the Conquest of Jerusalem*) and *al-Barq al-Shāmi* (*Syrian Lightning*). Both works are written in a highly ornate (possibly Persianate) style of rhymed prose that embellishes, indeed often obscures, a careful record of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn’s political activities and military campaigns. *Al-Faṭḥ* begins with Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn’s conquest of Jerusalem in 583/1187, because, the author says, this event opens a new era in Islamic history and thus constitutes a new *hijra* “of more lasting significance than the first.”¹³ It ends with Saladin’s death. Though most of the seven volumes of *al-Barq* are lost, it is a broader work than *al-Faṭḥ*, containing a valuable autobiographical record of ‘Imād al-Dīn’s service under two sultans, Nūrd al-Dīn and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, beginning in 562/1166. Besides their stylistic virtuosity, both works are remarkable as melanges of factual narrative, personal observations, and official documents. Both Ibn al-Athīr and the later historian Abū Shāma among others borrowed extensively from ‘Imād al-Dīn; Abū Shāma, in fact, abridged *al-Barq* and in the process stripped away its rhetorical excesses.

As already noted, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Alī al-‘Asqalānī al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil (529–596/1135–1200) was also a prominent official under Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, more prominent in fact than the other “official” historian of his reign. Born in Ascalon, he must have had a traditional scholarly education but served an apprenticeship in the Fāṭimid chancery in Cairo and eventually became its director; in this position he caught the attention of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn when the latter assumed the wazīrate there. Of all this historians of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil was best situated to observe events in Egypt, not least because he acted as Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn’s administrative deputy for two years and later returned there after Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn’s death to serve under al-Malik al-‘Aziz. Unfortunately, given al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil’s close association with Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and his access to official documents, many of which he himself wrote, his work has not survived except in extracts preserved by other historians. This is true of his *Rasā’il* (*Epistles*) as well as his *Mutajaddidāt* (*Diaries*); nevertheless, these extracts are sufficient in Gibb’s opinion to establish al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil in some respects as “the most valuable of all [the historians of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn] ...” since his works “... reflect some at least of

¹³ Cited by Khalidi, *Historical Thought*, 82; cf. D. Richards, “‘Imād al-Dīn al-Isfahānī: Administrator, Litterateur and Historian,” in Maya Shatzmiller (ed.), *Crusaders and Muslims in Twelfth-Century Syria* (Leiden, 1993), 144.

Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's real purposes and ideals."¹⁴ Be that as it may, it should be noted that as a professional scribe, his works are also marked by rhetorical embellishments, though not to the same extent as 'Imād al-Dīn's.

Three historians might be considered as transitional inasmuch as their works cover both the late Ayyūbid and early Mamlūk periods; for the former, these histories are heavily indebted to the historians of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn in both form and content. *Mir'āt al-Zamān fī Ta'rīkh al-A'yān* (*Mirror of the Time as Reflected in the History of Notables*) by Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī (581–654/1185–1256), like Ibn al-Athīr's *al-Kāmil*, is a universal history; it begins with the Creation and ends with the year of the author's death. Trained originally as a Hanbali scholar but converted to Ḥanafism under the influence of his patron, the Sultan al-Malik al-Mu'azzam 'Isā of Damascus, Ibn al-Jawzī shows considerably greater interest in the biographies of 'ulamā' than did his predecessors. But the *Mir'āt* is regarded mainly as a reworking of the histories of 'Imād al-Dīn, Ibn Shaddād, and others, supplemented by his own first-hand observations. For the years of his own lifetime the work is significant for its focus on the role of Damascus in late Ayyūbid history.¹⁵ 'Abd al-Rahmān Abū Shāma (599–665/1203–68), another Damascene scholar, is known primarily for his *al-Rawḍatayn fī Akhbār al-Dawlatayn* (*Two Gardens of Reports on Two Reigns*), a chronicle of the reigns of Nūr al-Dīn and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, based on the standard sources. A sequel, *al-Dhayl 'alā al-Rawḍatayn*, again focuses on events in Damascus as observed by his sources, Ibn al-Jawzī, and eyewitness informants, including himself. Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Wāṣil (604–97/1208–98), though also a scholar trained in Syria, has the distinction of occasional residence in Cairo, where he had access to the courts of both Ayyubid and Mamlūk sultans. In fact, Sultan Baybars sent him as an envoy to King Manfred of Sicily, but Ibn Wāṣil returned to his birthplace in Hama around 663/1264 as a *qāḍī* and remained there until his death.¹⁶ There he wrote his most important historical work, the annalistic *Mufarrij al-Kurūb fī Akhbār Banī Ayyūb* (*The Dissipater of Anxieties about Reports on the Ayyūbids*). One scholar has characterized the work as a reflection of the author's "desire to portray the house of Ayyūb as a kind of ideal Muslim dynasty;"¹⁷ another has deemed it to be "the most important source for the later Ayyūbids."¹⁸ Nevertheless, the *Mufarrij* has been shown to be based

¹⁴ Gibb, "Achievement," 161, 162.

¹⁵ R. Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols: The Ayyubids of Damascus, 1193–1260* (Albany, 1977), 395.

¹⁶ G. Schregle, *Die Sultanin von Ägypten: Šağarat ad-Durr in der arabischen Geschichtsschreibung und Literatur* (Wiesbaden, 1961), 12.

¹⁷ Humphreys, *From Saladin*, 396.

¹⁸ H. Halm, "Quellen und Literatur: IV. Die Ayyubiden," in U. Haarmann (ed.), *Geschichte der arabischen Welt* (Munich, 1987), 639.

largely on Abū Shāma and his sources, including Ibn al-Athīr, until the death of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and thereafter, when Ibn Wāṣil's own observations come into play.¹⁹ His experience in Egypt enabled him to write authoritatively about the replacement of the Ayyūbids by the Mamlūks, and his account of the career of Queen Shajar al-Durr was used freely and extensively by later historians.²⁰

Besides the chronicles and royal biographies, there were other genres of historiography cultivated under the Ayyūbids which are useful to historians such as biographical dictionaries, the best known being *Wafayāt al-A'yān wa-Anbā' Abnā' al-Zamān* (*Obituaries of Notables and News of the Prominent Men of the Time*) by Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Khallikān (608–81/1211–82). This is, of course, another transitional work, since Ibn Khallikān flourished during the early Mamlūk period, and served, in fact, as Shāfi'ī *qāḍī* in Cairo and Damascus under various Mamlūk sultans. While the book contains some 3,600 biographies of prominent Muslims who lived from the earliest times, the most valuable ones are those few who were the author's contemporaries, both politicians and intellectuals.

Hardly any documents of Ayyūbid provenance have survived other than a handful of decrees preserved at St. Catherine's monastery in the Sinai.²¹ Therefore the chancery and other administrative manuals of the period are of particular value, especially since the authors of the extant works were all Egyptians and served as officials in the Ayyūbid bureaucracy. Most prominent was the Copt al-As'ad ibn Mammātī (542–606/1147–1209), secretary of government financial bureaus under the first two Ayyūbid sultans of Egypt and author of *Qawānīn al-Dawāwīn* (*Rules for the Bureaux*). This work contains invaluable data on the economic life of Egyptian villages under Sultan 'Azīz, complete with a cadastral survey. His contemporary, the Shāfi'ī *qāḍī* 'Alī b. 'Uthmān al-Makhzūmī, was also a bureaucrat in the late Fāṭimid and early Ayyūbid fisc. Drawing on his experience as an expert on taxes, he wrote a manual for the use of other tax officers, entitled *al-Minhāj fī 'Ilm al-Kharāj* (*Methodology of Land Taxation*). Although the book has survived only in fragments, these contain useful information on commerce with the Italian city states and other economic matters.²² Still another Ayyūbid administrative manual was written by Abū 'Uthmān al-Nābulusī (588–660/1192–1261), who served in administrative capacities under sultans al-Kāmil and al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb. To the latter he dedicated his administrative handbook, *Luma' al-Qawānīn al-Muḍī'a fī Dawāwīn al-Diyār al-*

¹⁹ Ahmad, "Notes," 95.

²⁰ G. Schregle, *Die Sultanin*, 12.

²¹ See A. Atiya, *The Arabic Manuscripts of Mount Sinai* (Baltimore, 1955); cf. S. Stern, "Petitions from the Ayyūbid Period," *BSOAS*, 27 (1964), 1–32.

²² Conveniently organized by Claude Cahen, *Makhzūmiyyāt: études sur l'histoire économique et financière de l'Égypte médiévale* (Leiden, 1957).

Miṣriyya (*Bright Light on the Rules of the Egyptian Bureaux*). As will be seen below, works designed for chancery clerks became more elaborate and comprehensive during the Mamlūk period.

Mamlūk historiography

With the establishment of the Mamlūk dynasty following the murder of the last Ayyūbid sultan of Egypt in 648/1250 and the short, curious reign of Shajar al-Durr as Queen of the Muslims, the surviving Ayyūbid historians from Syria continued to record political events of the ruling circles in Egypt. Generally, a pro-Ayyūbid attitude is evident in their narratives, since more often than not they had been in the employ of the overthrown rulers. Such a bias can be discerned, for example, when both Ibn Wāṣil and Abū Shāma describe the murder of Turān Shāh and the career of Shajar al-Durr and her consort Aybak with “antipathy toward the Mamlūks who came to power in Egypt.”²³ But the Mamlūks soon found their own historians; these, almost without exception during the Bahṛī period (648–784/1250–1382) took a decidedly favorable attitude toward the ruling elite. This is particularly true of the historians who held official positions in the bureaucracy or the army, both in Egypt and in Syria. Here it should be noted that the Mamlūks gave Egypt, Palestine, and Syria a much more pervasive political, economic, and cultural unity than the Ayyūbids had been able to achieve. As a result, even the Syrian historians – scholars for the most part, affiliated with the religious establishment – surpassed their Ayyūbid predecessors in the attention they devoted to affairs in Egypt. In this respect, however, it is curious that Egyptian historians often borrowed heavily from the Syrians, even for reports on events in Egypt.

In addition to the historians of traditional background, be it scholarly or bureaucratic, a new breed flourished under the Mamlūks – historians closely associated with the Mamlūk military institution either as fully-fledged soldiers or as sons of Mamlūks. Although these new historians continued to write in the conventional literary forms – chronicles, biographies, and administrative handbooks – their lack of a rigorous academic training is betrayed by their Arabic prose, which is permeated with colloquialisms. Concomitant with a relaxation of linguistic and literary standards was the use by some historians, including ‘*ulamā*’, of devices designed to enhance the readability of their works, perhaps in an attempt to entertain or even titillate an expanding, more diversified market for history. Still another trend can be seen in the increased attention given to biography in various forms, to the extent that the space given to obituary notices in chronicles often outweighs the pages devoted to annals. Nevertheless, Mamlūk historiography is so

²³ G. Schregle, *Die Sultanin*, 12–13.

variegated and voluminous that it is difficult to make any generalization about more than just a few works or to find any that would apply to the solitary genius of Ibn Khaldūn. That being the case, the focus will again be on representative historians, chosen primarily on the basis of their originality as primary sources.

Bahrī historians

Typical of the bureaucrat historians of the Bahrī period are Muḥyi al-Dīn ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir; his nephew, Shāfi‘ ibn ‘Alī; and ‘Izz al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn al-Shaddād al-Ḥalabī. Of the three, Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir (620–92/1223–92), a Cairene with a conventional religious education, was undoubtedly the most prominent as confidential secretary (Kātib al-Sirr) and head of chancery (Ṣāhib Dīwān al-Inshā‘) under three sultans: Baybars, Qalāwūn, and al-Ashraf Khalil. During their reigns he wrote numerous royal documents for both domestic and foreign distribution, including letters of appointment, treaties, and diplomatic correspondence. In drafting these he is said to have adopted al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil as his guide.²⁴ But his major work, *al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir fī Sirat al-Malik al-Zāhir* (*The Splendid Garden Concerning the Life of al-Malik al-Zāhir*), was probably inspired by Bahā’ al-Dīn ibn Shaddād’s biography of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, *al-Nawādir*, in that each devoted special sections to a eulogistic enumeration of his subject’s merits in an attempt to depict him as an exemplary – and in the case of Baybars, a legitimate – Muslim ruler.²⁵ But the *Rawḍ* goes a step further in the direction of praise for the sultan: not only was the work known to have been commissioned by Baybars; it was read to him by the author for his approval. In effect it is an official biography with the propagandist aspects which that term implies; indeed, it has been characterized as “almost a ghosted autobiography.”²⁶ Still, thanks to the author’s official position and his access to the sultan, the work is an invaluable source and was regarded as such both by Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir’s contemporaries and by later historians. He also wrote biographies in the same vein for his subsequent masters. For Qalāwūn, this was *Tashrīf al-Ayyām wa al-‘Uṣūr fī Sirat al-Malik al-Manṣūr* (*The Glorious Days and Times of the Life of al-Malik al-Manṣūr*). Although the first part of this work has not survived, the extant portion is again informed by Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir’s first-hand knowledge of events at home and abroad, for he continued to travel as envoy for Qalāwūn, as he had for Baybars. As far as is known from a short extant fragment, the same is true of

²⁴ *El*2, III, 679.

²⁵ P. Holt, “Three Biographies of al-Zāhir Baybars,” in D. Morgan (ed.), *Medieval Historical Writing in the Christian and Islamic Worlds* (London, 1982), 23.

²⁶ P. Thorau, *The Lion of Egypt: Sultan Baybars I and the Near East in the Thirteenth Century*, trans. P. Holt (London and New York, 1992), 270.

Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir's biography of al-Ashraf Khalil: *al-Altāf al-Khaṭiyya min al-Sira al-Sharīfa al-Sultāniyya al-Malakiyya al-Ashrafiyya* (*Unseen Benevolences in the Noble Life of al-Sultān al-Ashraf*).

Like his uncle, Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāfi' ibn 'Alī al-Miṣrī (649–730/1251–1330) was employed in the Mamlūk chancery in Cairo, but his career was interrupted, though not ended, when he was blinded in battle with the Mongols in Syria in 680/1281. Without attaining Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir's high rank, he did enjoy access to the sultan, sometimes as assistant to his uncle but also on his own merit. He, too, drafted documents and was privy to the inner political workings of the state. Even as a historian, however, he worked under the shadow of his illustrious relative, and his biography of Baybars, *Husn al-Manāqib al-Sirriyya al-Muntaz'a min al-Sira al-Zāhiriyya* (*The Excellent Secret Virtues Selected from the Life of al-Zāhir*), purports to be a condensation of the *Rawḍ*. Nevertheless, perhaps because it was written twenty-five years after Baybars's death, some of the errors and excesses of its model were eliminated by Shāfi' ibn 'Alī, so that the *Husn* often serves a critical corrective.²⁷ In contrast to the reworking of the Baybars *sira*, Shāfi' ibn 'Alī's biography of Qalāwūn, *al-Faḍl al-Ma'thūr min Sīrat al-Sultān al-Malik al-Manṣūr* (*Virtue Transmitted from the Life of al-Malik al-Manṣūr*), is an original work composed partly during Qalāwūn's lifetime. It, too, however, has the character of an official biography designed to establish the sultan's legitimacy. Be that as it may, it is full of the author's personal observations of the sultan's conduct which lend an air of first-hand authenticity to the work.²⁸

The third bureaucrat-biographer of Mamlūk sultans, 'Izz al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Shaddād al-Halabī (613–84/1217–85), had served in Ayyūbid chanceries in Syria before he fled from the Mongols to Cairo in 659/1261. Whether he served in any official position in the Mamlūk capital is not known, but he did enjoy the favor of sultans Baybars, Berke, and Qalāwūn.²⁹ Besides a topographical study of Syria and Mesopotamia, Ibn Shaddād wrote a biography of Baybars – only one volume of two has survived – probably during the reign of Berke, which, curiously, he gave the same title as that by Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir. He also followed Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir in devoting a separate section to the sultan's virtues and exploits in an attempt to glorify the Muslim monarch. But even in this section Ibn Shaddād shows his originality by providing anecdotes not to be found in the earlier work, including valuable material on the activities of Mongol and Tur-

²⁷ Holt, "Three Biographies," 26–27.

²⁸ L. Northrup, *From Slave to Sultan: The Career of al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn and the Consolidation of Mamlūk Rule in Egypt and Syria (678–689 AH/1279–1290 AD)* (Stuttgart, forthcoming), 36–37.

²⁹ A. Huṭayṭ (ed.), *Die Geschichte des Sultans Baibars von 'Izz ad-dīn Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm b. Šaddād (st. 684/1285)* (Wiesbaden, 1983), 16.

koman immigrants in the Mamlūk army and state.³⁰ The annalistic section of the work is distinctive for its inclusion of obituary notices for notables who died in any given year of Baybars's reign.

Higher in rank and status than the bureaucratic historians were two who belonged to the ruling political-military class: one, Abū al-Fidā', was sultan of Ḥamā in his own right; the other, Baybars al-Manṣūrī, was a high-ranking officer in the Mamlūk army. Al-Malik al-Mu'ayyad 'Imād al-Dīn Abū al-Fidā' (672–732/1273–1331) a scion of the Ayyūbid royal family, had an illustrious career as a soldier and prince under the Mamlūks. He is even more famous as a geographer and historian. After military service in such campaigns as the Mamlūk conquest of Acre in 1291, Abū al-Fidā' enjoyed the patronage and company of al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, and it was this sultan who, in return for the efforts of Abū al-Fidā' to restore him to the throne in 709/1310, made him governor of Hama and subsequently sultan of that city. Thanks to his high position in Syria, his participation in military and political affairs, and his carefully cultivated friendship with al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, Abū al-Fidā' was in an excellent position to comment on Mamlūk affairs during his lifetime from a Syrian perspective. His history, *al-Mukhtaṣar fī Ta'rikh al-Bashar* (*Summary of the History of the Mankind*), written, perhaps, under the influence of his teacher, the Syrian historian, Ibn Wāṣil, is a universal chronicle, beginning with Adam and ending in 729/1329; it is supplemented by short obituary notices.

A contemporary of Abū al-Fidā', Rukn al-Dīn Baybars al-Manṣūrī al-Khiṭā'i (d. 725/1325), served in many military campaigns as a mamlūk before al-Nāṣir Muḥammad assigned him the highest rank in the Mamlūk army – Amīr of a Hundred and Commander of a Thousand. This sultan also rewarded Baybars al-Manṣūrī with several important administrative titles, including chief of chancery and for a short time, viceroy. Given his embroilment in the volatile politics of al-Nāṣir's reign and the sultan's distrust of all his officers, it is not surprising that Baybars al-Manṣūrī fell victim to his master's paranoia and was imprisoned for five years. After his release he devoted himself to study of the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*, having established a Ḥanafī *madrasa* outside Cairo. He is a rare, but not unique, example of a mamlūk who combined a military career with scholarship and his career shows how effective the Mamlūk educational system must have been for exceptional students. His major historical work, *Zubdat al-Fikra fī Ta'rikh al-Hijra* (*Choice Thoughts on Hijra History*), is a universal chronicle up to 724/1324 composed in many volumes, apparently with the help of Coptic scribes. While he is generally an authoritative and original source for the reigns of the three sultans under whom he served, beginning with Qalāwūn, recent research has shown that for that sultan and presumably for

³⁰ Holt, "Three Biographies," 24–25.

earlier sultans, he often relied on Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir.³¹ The annals for al-Nāṣir soon became a favorite source for other historians, both contemporary and later, because, no doubt, of the first-hand experiences the author transcribed. This section cannot be characterized as an encomium of the sultan, but neither is it critical; after all, it was obviously written when al-Nāṣir was in his prime. Later, Baybars al-Manṣūrī epitomized the Mamlūk sections of the *Zubda* in a book entitled *al-Tuhfa al-Mulūkiyya fī al-Dawla al-Turkiyya* (*The Royal Gem for the Turkish Dynasty*). It ends with the year 711/1312. Although the *Tuhfa* is a rhymed-prose summary of the earlier material found in the *Zubda*, the author added new data so that the two works should be used in tandem.³² Curiously, despite the general recognition of Baybars al-Manṣūrī's central importance as a source for early Mamlūk history, only the *Tuhfa* has so far been published.³³

One of the most interesting historians of the Bahrī Mamlūks, Sayf al-Dīn Abū Bakr ibn al-Dawādārī (d. after 736/1335), was a member of the group called *awlād al-nās*, meaning "sons of Mamlūks," who, because they were freeborn Muslims, could not, in theory and normally in practice, become Mamlūks themselves. As a result, some of them turned to belles lettres or to a branch of scholarship as a profession and thus served as a bridge between the native Arabic-speaking 'ulamā' and the alien, Turkic-speaking Mamlūks. Those who became historians, like Ibn al-Dawādārī, tended to take a more personalized approach to historiography than either the bureaucrats or the scholars, while continuing to write within the traditional genres. Son of a Mamlūk officer of Turkish descent who held several provincial posts in both Egypt and Syria, Ibn al-Dawādārī presents himself as a frequent, if not constant, observer of his father's official activities until the latter's death in 713/1311. Accordingly, Ibn al-Dawādārī constantly cites him as an eyewitness for many of the reports in the two contemporary volumes of his nine-part universal history, *Kanz al-Durar wa-Jāmi' al-Ghurar* (*Treasure of Pearls and Trove of the Radiant*), these being the volumes devoted to Bahrī history until the year 736/1336. Curiously, however, there is ample evidence that Ibn al-Dawādārī deliberately attributed to his father information that he copied from other historians, in an attempt, perhaps, to impart immediacy and interest to his work or maybe to increase its air of authenticity.³⁴ Or was he simply fond of exaggerating his own and his family's importance

³¹ Northrup, *From Sultan*, 36–37.

³² Little, *An Introduction to Mamlūk Historiography: An Analysis of Arabic Annalistic and Biographical Sources for the Reign of al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalā'ūn* (Wiesbaden and Montreal, 1970), 4–10.

³³ With the exception of excerpts for the years 693–98/1293–98, ed. and trans. in S. Elham, *Kitbuḡā und Lāḡin: Studien zur Mamluken-Geschichte nach Baibars al-Manṣūrī und an-Nuwayrī* (Freiburg, 1977), 83–140, Arabic 1–30.

³⁴ U. Haarmann, *Quellenstudien zur frühen Mamlukenzeit* (Freiburg, 1969), 111.

in the course of events? The possibility that he may have deliberately falsified and enhanced his own genealogy is a case in point.³⁵ But the distinctiveness of his history lies in what has been persuasively argued to be the efforts of Ibn al-Dawādārī and other toward “literarization” and “dehistorification” of historiography throughout the Mamlūk period.³⁶ To achieve the popularization of historical writing, in addition to masking the true identity of his sources Ibn al-Dawādārī adopted a number of literary devices, some of which had long been current, since, in fact, the time of the earliest biographies of the Prophet, which were heavily influenced by narrative, anecdotal, and poetic traditions of professional storytellers. Ibn al-Dawādārī, then, was reviving, or, more accurately, making greater quantitative use of anecdotes, folk romance, poetry, and *adab* in general, often couching these elements in a racy colloquial style which also served to bring history closer to the reader than the formal impersonal style adopted by most historians. Thus Ibn al-Dawādārī’s chronicles exemplify the attempt to break away from a rigid historiographical framework dominated by *ḥadīth* and *ḥadīth*-trained scholars in favor of annals spiced with anecdotes and mirabilia. In the earlier volumes of the *Kanz* these are often derived from popular legends and myths current among the Turks and Mongols.³⁷ However, in the two Mamlūk volumes these are not so prominent, as Ibn al-Dawādārī relies more on his father’s and his own experiences to enliven the narrative. Nevertheless, emphasis on the stylistic originality of Ibn al-Dawādārī should not be pushed too far, for he did choose the annalistic form as his literary vehicle; equally conventional was his use of lists of rulers and officials to introduce each year and of short obituary notices to end it. Also noteworthy is his liberal borrowing from the work of at least one Syrian-scholar historian, namely al-Jazarī; typically, he does not even mention al-Jazarī, much less acknowledge him as a source. Frequently Ibn al-Dawādārī’s written sources can be identified through literary detective work, but there are long passages in the volume devoted to al-Nāṣir Muḥammad concerning events in the kingdom of the Ilkhāns that Ibn al-Dawādārī reports only on the authority of *al-nāqil* (the reporter). These reports, complete with verbatim transcripts of private conversations, are all the more intriguing since they contain information not to be found elsewhere.³⁸

³⁵ Haarmann (ed.), *Die Chronik des Ibn al-Dawādārī, Achter Teil, Der Bericht über die frühen Mamluken* (Freiburg, 1971), 4.

³⁶ Haarmann, *Quellenstudien*, 159–81; cf. idem., “Auflösung und Bewahrung der klassischen Formen arabischer Geschichtsschreibung in der Zeit der Mamluken,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 121 (1971), 46–60.

³⁷ See Haarmann, “Turkish Legends in the Popular Historiography of Medieval Egypt,” *Proceedings of the VIth Congress of Arabic and Islamic Studies: Visby 13–16 August, Stockholm 17–19 August 1972* (Stockholm and Leiden, 1975), 97–107.

³⁸ Little, *Introduction*, 118–25.

Mūsā ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Shaykh Yaḥyā al-Yūsufi (676-759/1277-1358) cannot be positively identified either as a mamlūk or as one of the *awlād al-nās*, but he was closely associated with the latter as Muqaddam al-Ḥalqa, viz. commander of the non-mamlūk, freeborn corps in which the sons of mamlūks formed a special unit during much of the Bahrī period. In any event he served in many campaigns waged far away from Egypt, in Syria against the Mongols, for example, and in Yemen, and in Little Armenia. As a result he became acquainted with many prominent Mamlūk officers of high rank and quoted them freely as his sources, both for military engagements and for affairs of state. Al-Yūsufi also had friends in the Mamlūk bureaucracy, including a wazīr, two keepers of the privy purse, and a court physician among many others. These again al-Yūsufi quotes as eyewitnesses of public and private events. In this respect, of course, he had much in common with Ibn al-Dawādārī along with their lack of a traditional scholarly education. In fact, al-Yūsufi occasionally laments his lack of training and proficiency in Arabic grammar and literature, while at the same time acknowledging that his poems were admired and that his prose was adequate for purposes of official correspondence.³⁹ Be that as it may, his history is written in a highly colloquial style characteristic of Middle Arabic, that is, in classical Arabic influenced by local dialects. His only known work, *Nuzhat al-Nāzir fi Sīrat al-Malik al-Nāsir* (*A Spectator's Stroll through the Life of al-Malik al-Nāsir*), in about a dozen volumes, has survived only in a fragment covering the years 733-38/1332-38, but long passages for other years have been transcribed or recast by contemporary and later historians, most notably al-Shujā'ī and al-ʿAynī.⁴⁰ Enough of his original text is retrievable from such sources to establish the *Nuzha* as the fullest, best documented contemporary source for the reign of al-Malik al-Nāsir Muḥammad. In spite of the title's focus on al-Nāsir, it is known that the book began with the reign of Qalāwūn and ended with the year 755/1354, thirteen years after the sultan's death. Like Ibn al-Dawādārī's volume on the *sīra* (life, biography) of al-Nāsir (*al-Durr al-Fākhir fi Sīrat al-Malik al-Nāsir* (*The Splendid Pearl of the Life of al-Malik al-Nāsir*), the *Nuzha* is organized as an annalistic chronicle; but there is a major difference between the two works. Whereas Ibn al-Dawādārī pays only perfunctory attention to obituary notices, al-Yūsufi appends to each year detailed, often lengthy, biographies of notables, be they mamlūks, bureaucrats, scholars, or literati. Indeed, al-Yūsufi's keen interest in people is evident on every page as he describes their looks and analyzes their personalities, often from his personal knowledge of them but sometimes from gossip. He does not hesitate to

³⁹ Little, "The Recovery of a Lost Source for Bahrī Mamlūk History: Al-Yūsufi's *Nuzhat al-Nāzir fi Sīrat al-Malik al-Nāsir*," JAOS, 94 (1974), 48.

⁴⁰ Little, "An Analysis of the Relationship between Four Mamlūk Chronicles for 737-45," *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 19 (1974), 252-68.

create private conversations which he could not possibly have heard and to produce melodramatic scenarios marked by an obvious conviction that conspiracy and intrigue lay behind the lives and deaths of al-Nāṣir's retainers and officials. The *Nuzha*, then, is a distinctly personalized version of history; it reads like fiction and is even more "literarized" than Ibn al-Dawādārī's *Kanz al-Durar*. Nevertheless, the *Nuzha* is extremely valuable as the only history of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's reign that openly criticizes the sultan. Moreover, because it was used so copiously by other historians, it was extremely influential in creating the historical image of al-Nāṣir as an unprincipled megalomaniac that prevails today, despite the encomia of Ibn al-Dawādārī and others.

Among al-Yūsufī's contemporaries, Shams al-Dīn ibn al-Shujā'ī (d. after 756/1355–56) made the fullest use of *Nuzhat al-Nāṣir* in his work *Ta'rikh al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b Qalāwūn al-Ṣāliḥi wa-Awlādihi* (*History of al-Malik al-Nāṣir [...] and his Progeny*). Although this work survives only in a fragment for the years 737–745/1337–1345, collation with al-Yūsufī's extant annals for 738 and with passages for later years found in other sources indicate that al-Shujā'ī based his work almost entirely on al-Yūsufī's, without mentioning his name.⁴¹ But the *Ta'rikh* is extremely important for 741 and following years for preserving data from al-Yūsufī which is absent from other extant sources.

Another Egyptian historian who lived during the Bahārī period who should be mentioned is Mufaḍḍal ibn Abī al-Faḍā'il if only because he was a Copt. Unfortunately, nothing else is known about his life except that he finished his work, *al-Nahj al-Sadīd wa-al-Durr al-Farīd fīmā ba'd Ta'rikh Ibn al-'Amīd* (*The Right Path and Unique Pearl as Sequel to the History of Ibn al-'Amīd*) in 759/1358. Contrary to expectations, this work, a history of the Bahārī dynasty covering the years 658–741/1259–1341, shows little originality beyond a few short references to Coptic patriarchs. Otherwise, it is a typical Mamlūk chronicle and is based almost entirely on Muslim sources, including Baybars al-Manṣūrī, al-Nuwayrī, and al-Yūsufī. Even though at times Mufaḍḍal omitted details from his sources that might have reflected badly on Copts, he occasionally copied Muslim religious formulae into his work!⁴²

Besides Abu al-Fidā' there are several contemporary Syrian historians who, collectively, are of capital importance for Bahārī Mamlūk historiography. Despite the fact that two of these – Ibn Kathīr (c. 700–774/1300–73) and al-Dhahabī (673–748/1274–1348) – are more famous than their peers, their works, as far as Mamlūk history is concerned, are largely derivative from three of them: al-Birzālī, al-Yūnīnī, and al-Jazarī. All

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Little, *Introduction*, 37.

five were *ḥadīth* scholars trained primarily in Syria; most are known to have studied also in Cairo, where they could become acquainted with Egyptian affairs at first hand. Al-Birzālī, al-Yūnīnī, and al-Jazarī were closely associated as teachers, students, and friends. This association was so close and harmonious, in fact, that they lent one another their historical works in draft and felt free to borrow freely from them, sometimes with, sometimes without, acknowledgment. They also served as oral sources to one another, especially al-Birzālī and al-Jazarī. Such close collaboration among scholars has few, if any, parallels in Arabic historiography.

Of the three, the most important in terms of his influence on other historians was Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Jazarī (658–739/1260–1338). His principal work, *Hawādith al-Zamān wa-Anbā'uhu wa-Wafāyāt al-Akābir wa-al-A'yān min Abnā'ihī* (*Events and News of the Time with Obituaries of Worthies and Notables*), has survived only in fragments, few of which have been published so far. As the title indicates, the work gives equal emphasis to annals and obituaries and is valuable for the attention given to the lives and careers of Syrian scholars. Apparently conceived as a continuation of a twelfth-century Syrian chronicle, the *Hawādith* begins with the year 593/1196 and continues until the year of al-Jazarī's death. While the early sections are derived from written sources, most notably al-Yūnīnī's *Dhayl*, beginning with the year 678/1279–80 al-Jazarī writes from his own experience and that of his oral informants, including al-Birzālī, whose written work he probably used also.⁴³ Thanks to a wide network of informants, al-Jazarī was able to provide reports on events in such remote places as Yemen and the Ilkhānīd court in Iran as well as the Mamlūk capital in Cairo. Al-Jazarī's training as a *ḥadīth* expert may well have induced him to identify these informants, sometimes in the form of a chain of authorities (*isnād*) when he received a report at second- or third-hand. His professional interest is also apparent in the attention given to religious affairs. The space devoted to biographies of religious figures has already been mentioned, and he is one of the main sources for our knowledge of the trials of the celebrated Hanbalī jurist, Ibn Taymiyya, conducted in Cairo in 705/1305 by the Mamlūk authorities. Al-Jazarī did not witness the trials himself and had to rely on an Egyptian informant. Oddly enough, this did not prevent Ibn al-Dawādārī and al-Nuwayrī, both of whom were present in Cairo at the time, from dipping into al-Jazarī's second-hand account.⁴⁴ But al-Jazarī's interest certainly went beyond religious affairs. By dint of his friendship with mamlūk officers, he was well informed about military campaigns in Syria, Palestine, and Mesopotamia. In addition to reports on political, military and religious affairs, his annals are peppered with digres-

⁴³ Ibid., 53–57, 60–61.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 61.

sions and anecdotes about strange and curious events both at home and abroad: for example, a long narration of his visit to the pyramids in Giza. In this respect al-Jazarī serves as Syrian counterpart to Ibn al-Dawādārī for his deliberate introduction of entertaining material expressed, moreover, in a light literary style influenced by Damascus Arabic, all designed to loosen and popularize traditional Arabic historiography while at the same time retaining the traditional chronicle-obituary format.

Like al-Jazarī's, little of the work of 'Alam al-Dīn al-Qāsim al-Birzālī (665–739/1267–1339) is available. *Al-Muqtafā li-Ta'rikh al-Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn Abī Shāma* (Continuation of the History of [...] Abū Shāma) exists only in a manuscript fragment in such poor condition that it can no longer be handled by scholars. As a continuation of *Kitāb al-Rawḍatayn*, it begins with the year of Abū Shāma's death in 665/1267 – also the year of al-Birzālī's birth – and ends with 738/1338. This particular manuscript, located in Istanbul, contains only a rough draft in the form of a diary in which al-Birzālī mixed his notes on daily events with necrologies. In its present state the main value of the *Muqtafā* is the opportunity it affords for comparison with the texts of al-Jazarī and other historians. Collation suggests the interdependence of al-Birzālī and al-Jazarī, but the fragile, fragmentary state of *al-Muqtafā* makes definitive conclusions difficult. Suffice it to say that al-Birzālī's conception and presentation of history had much in common with al-Jazarī's and that both combined a provincial scholarly approach with a lively curiosity in events beyond Damascus.⁴⁵

Quṭb al-Dīn Mūsā al-Yūnīnī (640–726/1242–1326) also wrote a sequel to an Ayyubid work: *Dhayl Mir'āt al-Zamān* (Sequel to the Mirror of the Time), which begins with the year of Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī's death in 654/1256 and ends with 711/1312. Detailed textual study by several scholars has demonstrated that much, if not most, of the *Dhayl* is a close copy or edition of al-Jazarī's *Ḥawādith*. In fact, the correspondence between the two texts is so close that the most recent scholar to study these authors concludes that a later editor wrongly attributed a section of al-Jazarī's work to al-Yūnīnī!⁴⁶ Furthermore, he suggests that al-Birzālī, who was a student of al-Yūnīnī's borrowed material from al-Yūnīnī and passed it on to al-Jazarī. Al-Jazarī included it in *Ḥawādith*, and al-Yūnīnī, in turn, used it, twice removed, in his *Dhayl*.⁴⁷ Whether or not this particular conclusion can be substantiated is not so important as the incontestable fact that complex mutual borrowing did take place among this small group of Syrian historians. Extensive,

⁴⁵ Ibid., 56–57.

⁴⁶ Li Guo, "The Middle Bahri Mamlūks in Medieval Syrian Historiography: The Years 1297–1302 in the *Dhayl Mir'āt al-Zamān* Attributed to Quṭb al-Dīn Mūsā al-Yūnīnī: A Critical Edition with Introduction, Annotated Translation, and Source Criticism" (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1994), I, 105–13.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 110.

unacknowledged borrowing, as we have seen, is characteristic of Ayyūbid and Mamlūk historiography in general. To label such in practice as plagiarism is sometimes tempting but does not solve the problem faced by modern scholars in trying to trace the original source and to assess its reliability.

Oddly enough, an important chronicle for the Bahrī period is embedded in an encyclopedia designed for the use of chancery employees: al-Nuwayrī's *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab* (*All That Can be Desired in the Scribal Arts*). Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Nuwayrī (677–733/1279–1333) was himself a clerk and worked both in Syria and Egypt in the *Dīwān al-Khāṣṣ* (Bureau of the Privy Purse) and, later, the *Dīwān al-Inshā'* (Bureau of Chancery) among other offices. In the former his supervision of some of the royal properties and endowments gave him access to Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, though he fell for a while into his master's disfavor. His multi-volume encyclopedia is divided into four parts; the first three cover cosmography and natural history, man, and flora and fauna. The last part, comprising two-thirds of the work, is devoted to history, beginning with the Creation and ending in 731/1332. It is arranged chronologically within designated regions and dynasties, including, of course, the Bahrī Mamlūks of Egypt and Syria. But al-Nuwayrī is noteworthy among his Egyptian contemporaries for his willingness to break the annalistic format whenever he thought an event could not be recounted effectively within a single year: the trials of Ibn Taymiyya, for example.⁴⁸ As innocuous as this practice may seem, it is one of the few instances in Bahrī historiography of innovative experimentation with the rigid annalistic format.⁴⁹ Much of the section devoted to the Mamlūks is derivative, of course, from other historians, sometimes identified, sometimes not, but including Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, Baybars al-Manṣūrī, and al-Jazarī as well as the standard late Ayyūbid historians. Nevertheless, thanks to the access his position gave him to other administrators and military officers, al-Nuwayrī was able to add material from his own, or his informants' experience, so that his chronicle contains a great deal of original information. Moreover, there is evidence that he did not hesitate to reorganize and reinterpret the material he borrowed when he saw fit.⁵⁰ Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-'Umārī (700–749/1301–1349), Syrian by birth, was another chancery official in Cairo and Damascus who compiled reference works for scribes that contain material of interest to historians. His *al-Ta'rif bi-al-Muṣṭalah al-Sharīf* (*Instruction on the Noble Technique*) is a short manual for chancery clerks on drafting decrees and official correspondence. It also contains information on the organization and administration of the Mamlūk state. Though brief, it was a major source for the later encyclopedia

⁴⁸ Little, *Introduction*, 29.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 32.

compiled by al-Qalqashandī.⁵¹ But al-ʿUmārī's magnum opus was his vast encyclopedia, similar to al-Nuwayrī's *Nihāyat al-Arab* in scope and design, entitled *Masālik al-Absār fī Mamālik al-Amṣar* (*Paths of Discernment into the Kingdoms of the Lands*). It, too, contains a historical section of annals, dating from the hijra until 743/1343, but it is disappointing even for the period during which the author lived, being a copy of al-Dhahabī's *Duwal al-Islām* (*Dynasties of Islam*).⁵² However, other sections, in particular those devoted to specific regions contiguous to the Mamlūk Empire are of considerable interest, and several of these have been published: for example, those on India, the Mongol empires, Syria, and the Arabian peninsula.

Although Khalil ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī (696–764/1297–1363) was not the only author of biographical dictionaries who flourished during the Bahrī period, he was certainly the most prolific. Like Ibn al-Dawādārī, al-Ṣafadī was the son of a Mamlūk amīr, with an entrée into the elite society of the Mamlūks and its satellites in government, education, and the arts. Al-Ṣafadī's privileged status as a member of *awlād al-nās* was enhanced by his education in Syria, presumably in Safad, where he was born and eventually worked, but also in Damascus, Aleppo, and Cairo, as a student of the Qurʾān, *ḥadīth*, and literature with some of the most prominent scholars of the age, including, apparently, Ibn Taymiyya and al-Dhahabī.⁵³ As early as 723/1323 he found employment in Safad as a clerk in the chancery. From this post he was promoted to the Damascus chancery, and in this capacity he became a member of the entourage of the famous viceroy Tankiz, whom he frequently accompanied on official visits to Cairo and elsewhere. Inevitably, Tankiz incurred al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's disfavor and was executed; al-Ṣafadī survived and in 745/1345 was appointed to Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Ismāʿīl's chancery in Cairo. Later he returned to Syria, again as a chancery official, in Aleppo and elsewhere, and died in Damascus. Despite an obviously full professional career and extensive travel, al-Ṣafadī found time to write numerous books on various literary and linguistic subjects as well as a substantial body of poetry. His two massive works, still of major importance as historical sources, are both biographical dictionaries. Ironically, the less original of the two, *al-Wāfi bi-al-Wafāyāt* (*Sufficiency of Obituaries*), has received the major attention of scholars, presumably because of its comprehensiveness as a collection of thousands of biographies (more than 5,500 for the Muḥammads!) of prominent Muslims from the time of the Prophet to the author's contemporaries. Publication of this immense work began in 1931 and

⁵¹ R. Veselý, "Zu den Quellen al-Qalqashandī's *Ṣubḥ al-Aʿshā*," *Acta Universitatis Carolinae-Philologica*, 2 (1969), 13–14.

⁵² Little, *Introduction*, 40.

⁵³ Little, "Al-Ṣafadī as Biographer of His Contemporaries," in D. Little (ed.), *Essays on Islamic Civilization Presented to Niyazi Berkes* (Leiden, 1976), 206–07.

continues today. Al-Şafadī's relish for biography was not satisfied by this enormous work, so he devoted a separate dictionary to the lives of his contemporaries, entitled *A'yān al-'Aşr wa-A'wān al-Naşr* (*Notables of the Age and Supporters of Triumph*), comprising almost 1,900 biographies. Some of these were extracted from and embellished with rhymed prose and additional data from *al-Wāfi*, but half or more are completely independent of that work. Notwithstanding its great value as a contemporary source, *A'yān* has been published only in facsimile, without critical apparatus. Be that as it may, it is a tour de force almost unparalleled in Arabic historiography for its exploitation of literary sources and the author's vast network of eyewitness informants. Among the former are al-Birzālī's lost dictionary of 3,000 of his teachers, al-Udfuwī's biographical dictionary of notables from Upper Egypt, and a lost history of Egypt by Qutb al-Dīn 'Abd al-Karīm.⁵⁴ In number and status his oral informants are as impressive as al-Yūsufī's and include colleagues in the bureaucracy (including al-'Umarī and Shihāb al-Dīn Abū al-Thana', who headed the Damascus chancery), the grammarian Abū Ḥayyān, the *ḥadīth* expert Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, and the chief Shāfi'ī qāḍī, Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī.⁵⁵ These are only some of the most eminent of the dozens of informants he cites for first-hand information and anecdotes about his biographees. Unfortunately, only a few women rated his notice, and these are either wives of high-ranking Mamlūks or students of *ḥadīth*. Almost all of the biographies follow a standard, more or less chronological, format and differ from those of *al-Wāfi* only by rhymed-prose introductions in the former, summing up al-Şafadī's estimate of the person's character and accomplishments. From a structural point of view the long biography of al-Nāşir Muḥammad is noteworthy in both dictionaries inasmuch as it is organized as annals, following which al-Şafadī appends lists of that sultan's chief officers of state and contemporary rulers.⁵⁶ But the influence of chronicles and biographies was clearly reciprocal, for Ibn al-Dawādārī's chronicle-biography of al-Nāşir Muḥammad's reign has the same format as al-Şafadī's shorter version.

Burjī historians

Among many anomalies in the editing, translation, analysis, and publication of Mamlūk histories as conducted by both eastern and western scholars is their uncritical concentration on some historians of the Circassian period at the expense of others, whether Bahrī or Burjī, irrespective, at times, of the historical value of their works. Thus the chronicles of al-Maqrīzī for the

⁵⁴ Ibid., 200–02.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 202–06.

⁵⁶ Little, *Introduction*, 100–01.

Baḥrī period were edited and partially translated long before those of his contemporary al-ʿAynī began to be published, despite the fact that the latter are far superior to the former as a source for the period in most respects. Although Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddima* (*Prolegomena*) has long been recognized as the acme of Muslim historiography, Ibn Khaldūn's uniqueness as a theorist has served to diminish the attention given to his chronicles. The works of Ibn Taghrī Birdī, like those of al-Maqrīzī, were edited, published, and translated before they were subjected to critical scrutiny. In fact, critical analysis of the originality, sources, and possible interdependence of these and other Burjī historians has not yet approached the level of scholarship on the Baḥrī historians. Many of the observations made here, then, should be regarded as tentative, pending further research and publication.

A case in point is the Egyptian scholar, Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn al-Furāt (735–807/1334–1405), who after being educated in *ḥadīth*, secured positions as a notary. Otherwise, little is known about him, and his universal history, *Taʾriḫ al-Duwal wa-al-Mulūk* (*History of Dynasties and Kings*), has survived only in fragments, a few of which have been published. Of these fragments the Ayyūbid section is described as important because Ibn al-Furāt made extensive use of the lost history by the Aleppan Shīʿī historian, Ibn Abī Ṭayyīʾ (as did Abū Shāma).⁵⁷ The sections on the Baḥrī sultans have been shown to be largely derivative from al-Nuwayrī with additions from al-Jazarī.⁵⁸ So far only a single volume has been published for the years of Ibn al-Furāt's own lifetime; arranged as a diary, it covers the period 789–797/1387–1395. Short reports of events are followed by numerous obituary notices. Since Ibn al-Furāt was not in the habit of identifying his sources for this period, it will be impossible to determine his originality for contemporary events until such time as comparison with other sources has been undertaken.

The conventional history of Ibn al-Furāt and other Mamlūk historians does nothing to anticipate the contribution of Ibn Khaldūn. Apparently unappreciated for his genius during his lifetime and for centuries thereafter, he was finally discovered by the Ottoman historian Naʿīma in the eighteenth century and was subsequently recognized and acclaimed in the west as a major figure in the development of the philosophy of history and sociology.

Nor does Ibn Khaldūn's life as set forth in his autobiography account for the originality of his thought. A good case could be made for characterizing him as a careerist because of the multiplicity of his appointments and dismissals at courts stretching from Spain to Cairo; nevertheless, he obviously found time and energy to function as a prolific historian. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Khaldūn (732–808/1332–1406) was born in

⁵⁷ El2, III, 769.

⁵⁸ Little, *Introduction*, 73–74.

Tunis and studied there with eminent scholars the subjects of the traditional Islamic curriculum; he was deeply influenced by philosophy and theology. When he was seventeen his parents died of plague and he emigrated to Fez. During twenty-three years' residence in the Maghrib he continued his studies and held various positions, including Secretary of the Chancery at the court of the Marinid sultan Abū 'Inān Fāris. He also served time in prison for his alleged involvement in an attempted palace coup. Politics led him to move to Granada in 760/1359, where under the patronage of the famous wazīr and poet Ibn al-Khaṭīb, Ibn Khaldūn was well received at the Nasrid court and served as envoy to the Christians of Seville. After seven years he returned to the Maghrib. There he combined study with political office and intrigue; the latter induced him to return to Spain for a while and back to the Maghrib once more. During a four-year period of seclusion (776-80/1375-79), he worked on the *Muqaddima*. Then he returned to his birthplace as a scholar and teacher. In Tunis he prepared the first edition of his universal history, *Kitāb al-'Ibar wa-al-Mubtada' wa-al-Khabar* (*Book of Examples and Register of Subjects and Predicates*), a copy of which he presented to the Hafsid sultan. But Ibn Khaldūn apparently enjoyed no peace of mind in Tunis, so in 784/1382 he left, with the sultan's permission, ostensibly to perform the pilgrimage. He landed in Cairo, where he found employment both as a professor of jurisprudence and, in 786/1384, as chief Mālikī *qāḍī* under Sultan Barqūq. From the latter office he was presumably dismissed out of professional envy, later reinstated, again dismissed, until he had served in this capacity six times.⁵⁹ But he did manage to retain several important teaching positions and even served as head of a royal Sūfī monastery. Perhaps his most illustrious public service under the Mamlūks was as an envoy to Timūr-Lenk, whom he met on several occasions during the siege of Damascus in 1400.

Obviously Ibn Khaldūn's wide experience as a scholar and public servant under many masters should have been beneficial to a history oriented toward *siyāsa* (politics) and the conduct of public affairs, and his cyclical view of the rise and fall of dynasties that originated with nomads imbued with religious fervor, flourished as conquerors, and declined once they had become sedentarized and corrupted by effete urban life, was grounded in Ibn Khaldūn's knowledge of the role of both Arab and Bedouin tribesmen in Maghribi history. Nevertheless, there is little in his biography to explain satisfactorily his unique conceptualization of the nature and function of history within the Islamic arts, sciences, and crafts, though scores of scholars have certainly tried to do so. The relationship of the *Muqaddima* to the *'Ibar*, or, more precisely, the alleged failure of the latter to meet the standards of the former, is but one of many issues raised by Ibn Khaldūn's

⁵⁹ *Elz*, III, 827-28.

work. Since this is a subject of great complexity, it must suffice to point out that two of the most recent students of this question have taken a revisionist stance and argued that the great historian has been misunderstood:

Because most modern scholarship has taken relatively little interest in the *History*, tending in fact to dismiss it as an incongruous appendage to the *Muqaddima* or as no better or even worse than many typical histories of that age, it serves our interest well here to show . . . that Ibn Khaldūn's history was a rigorous and precisely constructed account, arranged by states, of world history as it needs to be understood and rewritten when the principles of the *Muqaddima* are kept in view.⁶⁰

It should also be noted that the *Ibar* is recognized as being one of the most important single sources on the history of the Maghrib under Muslim rule. Be that as it may, there are long stretches in the *Ibar* derived totally from earlier sources. For the early reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, for example, Ibn Khaldūn was content to summarize al-Nuwayrī and supplement him briefly with material from the standard Syrian sources, al-Jazarī and al-Yūnīnī.⁶¹ Nevertheless, even the standard account of Baḥrī history is dramatically punctuated by Ibn Khaldūn's eloquent passage on the impact of slave soldiers on Islamic history through their defeat of the pagan Mongols.⁶² As a historian of his contemporaries, Ibn Khaldūn's history of Sultan Barqūq is particularly valuable from the perspective of an insider under this sultan's patronage. As might be expected, the author is not critical of his patron, and his chronicle of the years of Barqūq's reign (784–801/1382–99) is typical of the court histories of the Mamlūk period.

Ibn Khaldūn's autobiography should also be mentioned as a noteworthy historical source if only because of the rarity of this genre in Muslim literature. *Al-Ta'rif bi-Ibn Khaldūn wa-Rihlatuha Gharban was Sharqan* (Introducing Ibn Khaldūn and His Travel East and West) was originally intended as an appendix to the *Ibar*, but at some point the author decided to publish the work separately as reflections on his life and times until a few months before his death.⁶³ While the *Ta'rif* focuses on the major events of Ibn Khaldūn's life, these led him to digressions on the places and people with whom he was involved, often summarizing fuller discussions in the *Ibar*. Moreover, the work is enlivened with quotations from poetry and samples of his correspondence composed in rhymed prose. Unfortunately, however,

⁶⁰ Tarif Khalidi, *Historical Thought*, 223; cf. Aziz al-Azmeh, *Ibn Khaldūn in Modern Scholarship: A Study in Orientalism* (London, 1981), 201–20.

⁶¹ Little, *Introduction*, 75–76.

⁶² D. Ayalon, "Mamlūkiyyāt: (B) Ibn Khaldūn's View of the Mamlūk Phenomenon," *JSAI*, 2 (1980), 340–49.

⁶³ W. Fischel, *Ibn Khaldūn in Egypt: His Public Functions and His Historical Research* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967), 160–66.

the *Ta'rif* contains little information about the central issue of the process by which his major work was inspired and composed.

Taqī al-Dīn Ahmad al-Maqrīzī (766–845/1364–1442) is probably the best-known historian of the Mamlūk period with the obvious exception of Ibn Khaldūn, who may have been one of his 600 teachers. Western scholars have been profuse in their praise of al-Maqrīzī, acclaiming him as “beyond doubt the most eminent of the Mamlūk historians,” or judging him to be “the best of the Muslim historians of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries,” and “the *Sulūk* to be the leading production of the period.”⁶⁴ It was claimed that this rank could be justified by the fact that “the leading historians of that generation in Egypt were al-Maqrīzī’s students,” such as Ibn Taghri Birdi and al-Sakhāwī, and that other contemporaries, such as Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī and al-‘Aynī, “were *ḥadīth* scholars more than historians, since they did not devote their full attention to history as did al-Maqrīzī.”⁶⁵ Another reason for al-Maqrīzī’s fame is undoubtedly the sheer bulk of his historical works; in addition to the several books devoted to the history of Egypt he was author of monographs on such ancillary subjects as famine, tribes, coins, measures, etc. Still another reason for his popularity may well be the accident that his works have been published and widely distributed before those of his unheralded contemporary, al-‘Aynī.

Before he became a professional historian al-Maqrīzī had a varied, if lackluster, career as a teacher and public official. Mainly in Cairo, his birthplace, but also for ten years in Damascus, he served in various capacities such as chancery clerk, judge, prayer leader, *muhtasib*, financial officer, and professor of *ḥadīth*. Trained in the Islamic curriculum, al-Maqrīzī studied Hanafī jurisprudence with his grandfather, but after the latter’s death renounced and even attacked it in favor of Shāfi‘ism. Around 821/1418, when al-Maqrīzī returned to Cairo from Damascus, he seems to have retired from teaching and public service in order to devote himself to his interest in Egyptian history. Nevertheless, in 833–39/1430–35 he is known to have sojourned in Mecca with his family. There he again taught *ḥadīth* while writing history.⁶⁶

Perhaps, it has been suggested, al-Maqrīzī’s several separate historical works should be considered as parts of a comprehensive history of Egypt.⁶⁷ The first of these parts, written between 820 and 840/1417 and 1436, is the great *al-Mawā‘iz wa-al-I‘tibār bi-Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-al-Āthār fi Miṣr wa-al-Qāhira* (*Admonitions and Reflections on the Quarters and Monuments in*

⁶⁴ Philip Hitti and M. M. Ziyāda are both cited by R. Broadhurst (trans.), *A History of the Ayyubid Sultans of Egypt* (Boston, 1980), xvi–xvii.

⁶⁵ M. Ziyāda (ed.), *Kitāb al-Sulūk li-Ma‘rifat Duwal al-Mulūk* (Cairo, 1934), I, p. waw.

⁶⁶ Ziyāda, *Al-Mu‘arrikhūn fi Miṣr fi al-Qarn al-Khāmis ‘Ashar al-Milādī, al-Qarn al-Tāsi‘ al-Hijrī* (Cairo, 1954), 9.

⁶⁷ H. A. R. Gibb, *Arabic Literature: An Introduction* (Oxford, 1963), 146.

Fuṣṭāṭ and Cairo), commonly known as *al-Khiṭaṭ*, a topographical study focusing on Cairo but encompassing Egypt in general. Whether it was plagiarized, as sometimes charged, from an earlier work is not important, since the alleged source is lost and is preserved only in *al-Khiṭaṭ*. It should be noted, moreover, that there were other precedents for Mamlūk topographical history. Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, for example, was the author of a lost book on the topography of Cairo, frequently cited by al-Maqrizī, especially for the Fāṭimid city,⁶⁸ and Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-‘Umari included many descriptions of monuments in his encyclopedia, *Masālik al-Absār*. In any case, the *Khiṭaṭ* has served as a prime source for many aspects of Egyptian history, primarily, it is true, for the architectural history of Islamic edifices but also for the organization and conduct of urban life in Cairo. Building on this core, al-Maqrizī proceeded to write a series of chronicles and biographies covering the history of Egypt from the Muslim conquest up until his own day. These works include histories of Fuṣṭāṭ as a province of the caliphate, Cairo under the Fāṭimids, and, finally, Egypt under the Ayyubids and Mamlūks, *al-Sulūk li-Ma‘rifat Duwal al-Mulūk* (*The Path to Knowledge of Dynasties and Kings*). Curiously, although parts of this latter book were published and translated at a relatively early date on the strength of scholarly admiration for *al-Khiṭaṭ*, the later, contemporary, sections of *al-Sulūk* were not published until much later. As far as Bahrī Mamlūk history is concerned, al-Maqrizī had to rely completely, of course, on earlier sources, and these he adapted freely and sometimes indiscriminately without identifying them. Perhaps the most egregious example of his abuse of sources is found in his distortion of al-‘Umari’s remarks on the Mongols, whereby al-Maqrizī inflated and distorted the influence of Mongol law on Mamlūk administrative justice.⁶⁹ Unfortunately, until such time as the contemporary annals of *al-Sulūk* have been compared with those of other historians, especially those of al-‘Aynī, al-Maqrizī’s significance as a historian will remain as a compiler and preserver of the work of others.

Badr al-Dīn al-‘Aynī (762–855/1361–1451) also combined a career as public teacher and *fiqh* scholar with a professional interest in history. After a conventional education in Qur’ān, *ḥadīth*, and related disciplines in northern Syria, where he learned Turkish as well as Arabic, al-‘Aynī moved to Cairo in 801/1399. There he was appointed *muḥtasib* to replace al-Maqrizī. In and out of this office several times he served in other capacities as well, including professor, Supervisor of Pious Endowments, and Chief Ḥanafī Judge.⁷⁰ In these high positions al-‘Aynī had access to several sultans and, in fact, composed eulogistic biographies of three of them: al-Mu‘ayyad Shaykh, al-

⁶⁸ *El*2, III, 679; VI, 194.

⁶⁹ Ayalon, “The Great *Yāsa* of Chingiz Khān: A Re-examination. (C-2) Al-Maqrizī’s Passage on the *Yāsa* under the Mamlūks,” *Studia Islamica*, 38 (1973), 121–23.

⁷⁰ Ziyāda, *Al-Mu‘arrikhūn*, 20.

Zāhir Taṭar, and al-Ashraf Barsbay.⁷¹ Indeed, al-ʿAynī used to meet regularly with Barsbay to explain to him the intricacies of *fiqh* and to translate his history extemporaneously into Turkish, since Barsbay could not read Arabic. His multi-volume work, *ʿIqd al-Jumān fi Taʾrikh Ahl al-Zamān* (*A Pearl Necklace of the History of the People of the Time*), is a universal history, beginning with the Creation and proceeding through eight and a half centuries of Muslim dynasties. Inexplicably, the parts concerning the Mamlūks began to be published only in 1987. Inexplicably, because as already stated, *ʿIqd al-Jumān* is superior to al-Maqrīzī's *Sulūk*; this is true in terms both of systematic organization and identification and citation of sources. Moreover, it can be demonstrated in many cases that when al-ʿAynī and al-Maqrīzī used the same source, particularly al-Yūsufī, al-ʿAynī almost invariably gave a fuller, more detailed adaptation of the original than did al-Maqrīzī.⁷² In fact, one of the chief merits of *ʿIqd al-Jumān* for the Bahrī period is his preservation and identification of so much of al-Yūsufī's work. As far as organization and presentation are concerned, al-Maqrīzī follows strict chronological order in his annals, month by month and even day by day when possible. Al-ʿAynī, on the other hand, routinely follows a topical order, starting each annal with a list of rulers and officials, followed by discussion of the most prominent events of the year, and ending with reports of "remaining" events. Both historians append obituary notices to each annal; these are divided roughly into *ʿulamāʾ* and secular personages, with the former normally taking priority unless a ruler such as a sultan happened to die in a given year.

So far only a brief selection of al-ʿAynī's annals for the Burjī period has been published. These cover a period of twenty-six years, 825–50/1421–47, in which the author lived. As preserved, these annals are similar in general to al-Maqrīzī's chronological format, though al-ʿAynī usually prefaces each annal with a lengthy list of rulers and functionaries. Curiously, few topics are developed in the same detail they received in the earlier sections, in which al-ʿAynī had to rely exclusively on written sources; in fact, this contemporary section of the work reads almost like a day book which may have been intended as a first draft of a later work, planned but not completed. Infrequently al-ʿAynī mentions his own observation of events, but for the most part he cites no sources. Again, however, judgment of his significance as a historian, like al-Maqrīzī's, should be suspended until systematic comparison of their works has been undertaken.

Abū al-Maḥāsin Yūsuf ibn Taghrī Birdī (812–74/1409–70) has been praised as a historian for his intimate familiarity "with Mamlūk military society and with the Mamlūk army. His knowledge of these institutions was

⁷¹ ʿA. al-Qarmūt (ed.), *ʿIqd al-Jumān fi Taʾrikh Ahl al-Zamān* (Cairo, 1989), 39.

⁷² Little, "Analysis," 259–61.

far superior to that of any other Mamlūk historian. But for his writings no detailed and reliable reconstruction of Mamlūk society would be possible".⁷³

Son of the highest-ranking Mamlūk officers under sultans Barqūq and Faraj, Ibn Taghrī Birdī was reared after his father died by two of his in-laws, a Ḥanafī judge and a Shāfi'i judge. They saw to it that Ibn Taghrī Birdī was educated in the Islamic sciences, including the study of history under al-Maqrizī and al-'Aynī, before he was taken under the patronage of a group of his father's mamlūks, who apparently undertook to train him in the arts of war.⁷⁴ Thus he was one of the privileged few historians whose milieu embraced the military and scholarly worlds. Furthermore, thanks to his status as a member of the elite *awlād al-nās* and his acquaintance with several sultans, including al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh, Barsbay, Jaqmaq, and Khushqadam, he naturally had access to the Mamlūk court. But Ibn Taghrī Birdī was a historian by profession, conscious of inheriting al-Maqrizī's and al-'Aynī's prestige as premier court historian of his time.⁷⁵ He was author of a biographical dictionary (to be discussed later) and two major chronicles. *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhira fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhira* (*Resplendant Stars among the Kings of Miṣr and Cairo*) is a history of Islamic Egypt, beginning with its conquest and ending with 872/1468. It is a work by a courtier for courtiers, or, more specifically, for Sultan Jaqmaq's son, who died before he could succeed his father on the throne. In format the *Nujūm* differs markedly from Ayyūbid and other Mamlūk histories in that it is arranged by reigns of individual rulers rather than strict annalistic chronology. Nevertheless, within each reign chronological order is followed, though there is no formal division of events by years. In keeping with this arrangement, Ibn Taghrī Birdī withheld the obituaries until the end of each sultan's reign, at which point he grouped them by each year. Whatever his purpose may have been, these structural innovations reinforce the biographical emphasis of this work. In contrast, Ibn Taghrī Birdī's second chronicle reverts to the traditional format, perhaps because it was intended as a continuation of al-Maqrizī's *al-Sulūk*. The title, *Ḥawādith al-Duhūr fī Maḍā al-Ayyām wa-al-Shuhūr* (*Events of the Times within the Passage of Days and Months*), clearly reflects the annalistic structure; the biographies, noticeably longer than those in *al-Sulūk*, are placed conventionally after each annal. This work begins where *al-Sulūk* ends, with 845/1441, and ends with 874/1469, covering the reigns of seven sultans, plus the early years of Qāytbāy. Although there is some overlap between the *Nujūm* and *Ḥawādith*, the former is not as detailed or as comprehensive as the latter. Obviously, given

⁷³ Ayalon, "Notes on the *Furūsiyya* Exercises and Games in the Mamlūk Sultanate," *Scripta Hierosolymitana*, 9 (1961), 32.

⁷⁴ Ziyāda, *Al-Mu'arrikhūn*, 28.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.

Ibn Taghrī Birdī's access to court circles and his familiarity with the Mamlūk system, the *Ḥawāḍith* and the contemporary section of the *Nujūm* constitute an invaluable personal commentary on persons, institutions, and events. Just as obviously, Ibn Taghrī Birdī had to rely on earlier written sources for the bulk of *al-Nujūm*, many of which he cited by name. Curiously, al-Maqrīzī is seldom mentioned. But his dependence on earlier sources did not deter Ibn Taghrī Birdī from placing his own interpretations on events, and these are often difficult if not impossible to disentangle from the originals. Despite the fact that even some of his contemporaries, most notably al-Sakhāwī, excoriated him for his failings as a historian and an Arabist, many of his errors have received wide currency until the present day. Recently, however, careful analysis of his texts and collation with other sources have resulted in considerable skepticism toward his version of some events and a recognition of his tendency to idealize the reigns of the Bahrī sultans, a tendency he shared with al-Maqrīzī.⁷⁶ Be that as it may, as a historian of his own generation, specifically of the early reign of Qāyṭbāy, Ibn Taghrī Birdī's writings have been characterized as expressing "sober judgments of crises and shrewd assessments of character" as well as "musings of a mature thinker whose opinions were tinged with the cynicism of old age."⁷⁷

Although there are several other chroniclers of the Circassian period whose works should not be neglected by present-day students, this survey ends with Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Iyās al-Ḥanafī (852–930/1448–1524), since both his career and his oeuvre epitomize several salient aspects of Mamlūk historiography. In his life and work Ibn Iyās is reminiscent of Ibn al-Dawādārī and Ibn Taghrī Birdī, in that all three belonged to Mamlūk families and based their histories of contemporaneous events on eyewitness experience – their own and others'. All three, moreover, wrote popularized histories in a conventional format but in a style influenced by the Egyptian vernacular and various literary devices.

Indeed, the *Badā'i' az-zuhūr* of Ibn Iyās can be characterized as history in only a very limited way: in its popular thematics and its fabulist embellishments, alien to historical factuality, this last great medieval Arabic chronicle was linked to the historicized folk romance, hence to the light prose that was extremely popular at the time but was not recognized as literature. [This type of prose] had developed as a substratum from the days of earliest Islam until Mamlūk times, next to, or, more accurately, beneath, scholarly historiography, but was now reintegrated with it for the first time since the tenth century.⁷⁸

Whatever Ibn Iyās's shortcomings as a historian may be, his work is of

⁷⁶ See Little, *Introduction*, 90–92; Ayalon, "The Circassians in the Mamluk Kingdom," *JAOS*, 69 (1949), 140, 144–45.

⁷⁷ C. Petry, *Protectors or Praetorians? The Last Mamlūk Sultans and Egypt's Waning as a Great Power* (Albany, 1994), 5.

⁷⁸ Haarmann, "Auflösung," 55.

capital importance for its account of the decline of the Mamlūk state under the sultans Qāyrbāy, al-Ghawrī, and Ṭumānbāy, the defeat of the Mamlūks by the Ottomans, and the subsequent occupation of Egypt. Even though Ibn Iyās was a scion of Mamlūks on both sides of his family and held a sizable fief (*iqṭāʿ*), he himself was not prominent enough to be included in any of the biographical notices of the time, perhaps because he held no public office; nor was he, like Ibn Taghrī Birdī and al-ʿAynī, an intimate of sultans. Regarding his education, it is known only that he was a student of the famous scholar al-Suyūṭī and the Ḥanafī jurist ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ ibn Khalīl.⁷⁹ Later, the income derived from his fief enabled him to devote himself at his leisure to his history of Egypt: *Badāʾiʿ al-Zuhūr fī Waqāʾiʿ al-Duhūr* (*Marvellous Blooms among Events of the Times*), which ends with 922/1528. For the period prior to his own lifetime, Ibn Iyās states that he relied on approximately thirty-seven histories.⁸⁰ Predictably, the work becomes more detailed for events and biographies of the author's own era, when he divides the annals into monthly records of events interspersed with biographies, almost in the form of a diary. Also remarkable is the frequent citation of verses, sometimes of the historian's own composition. But it is, of course, as an observer and interpreter of the transition from Mamlūk to Ottoman rule that Ibn Iyās gained his status as a worthy successor to the great historians of the Circassian period. With them he shared a propensity to criticize the Circassian sultans in contrast to the Baḥrī Turks, but once the former had been defeated by the Ottomans, "he almost completely forgets all the evils of the *ancien régime*, which he himself had so frequently exposed and castigated, and embarks on an idealization of that regime, turning all his fury against the Ottoman."⁸¹ However, despite Ibn Iyās's shifting subjectivity, his annals of the last years of the Mamlūk sultanate and the inception of Ottoman rule are universally admired by modern historians, who use such language as "a towering figure among chroniclers of the later Middle Ages in Egypt" to characterize Ibn Iyās⁸² and "superb chronicle" to judge his work.⁸³

The compilation of vast biographical dictionaries continued during the Burjī period. Some of these were highly specialized, focusing, for example, on scholars of a specific legal school, while others, following in the footsteps

⁷⁹ *El*2, III, 812.

⁸⁰ M. Muṣṭafā (ed.), *Unpublished Pages of the Chronicle of Ibn Iyās*, AH 857–872/AD 1453–1468, (Cairo, 1951), 23.

⁸¹ Ayalon, "Mamlūk Military Aristocracy during the First Years of the Ottoman Occupation of Egypt," in C. Bosworth (ed.), *The Islamic World, from Classical to Modern Times* (Princeton, 1989), 420.

⁸² Petry, *Protectors*, 7.

⁸³ Ayalon, "Aristocracy," 413; cf. M. Winter, *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt: Studies in the Writings of ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī* (New Brunswick and London, 1982), 5.

of al-Şafadī, sketched the lives of notable individuals from many spheres of Mamlūk society. Among the latter, the works of Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, Ibn Taghrī Birdī, and al-Sakhāwī are essential sources for modern historians of the Mamlūks.

Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (773–852/1372–1449) was one of the most prominent religious figures in Egypt of his time. An indefatigable scholar of the science of *ḥadīth*, he taught it in numerous Mamlūk educational institutions in Cairo and compiled voluminous works on various aspects of the subject. With his acknowledged expertise on this linchpin of the law, it was inevitable that he should be drafted into the judicial bureaucracy, which, in fact, he headed intermittently as chief Shāfiʿi judge for twenty-one years.⁸⁴ Notwithstanding his preoccupation with jurisprudence and the law, Ibn Ḥajar found time to cultivate his interest in history and wrote both a chronicle and a biographical dictionary. *Inbāʾ al-Ghumr fī Abnāʾ al-ʿUmr* (*Information for the Uninitiated about the Men of the Time*) comprises an annalistic history of the Mamlūk state during his own lifetime, beginning with the year of his birth to 850/1446, two years before his death. Focus on a limited period is also characteristic of his biographical dictionary entitled *al-Durar al-Kāmina fī Aʿyān al-Mīʾa al-Thāmina* (*Hidden Pearls Regarding the Notables of the Eighth Century*). It contains no less than 5,204 biographies of persons from every walk of life, mainly Egyptians and Syrians, who happened to have died between 700 and 799 AH. Given the fact that the author was not born until 773, his data are derived almost exclusively from written sources, most notably al-Şafadī. Nevertheless, the accessibility of the work and its integration of a variety of materials make it an indispensable reference for the lives of Bahṛī Mamlūk notables.

Though Ibn Taghrī Birdī is renowned chiefly for his two chronicles, both of which contain obituaries, he was also author of a major biographical dictionary, *al-Manhal al-Şāfi wa-al-Mustawfi baʿd al-Wāfi* (*The Pure Pool and Completion of al-Wāfi*). As the title indicates, the work was intended as a companion volume to al-Şafadī's *al-Wāfi bi-al-Wafāyāt*, upon which Ibn Taghrī Birdī relied heavily, since *al-Manhal* contains biographies of notables who died during the period 650/1252 to 862/1458. Like al-Şafadī, Ibn Taghrī Birdī aimed at comprehensiveness, and the 2,822 biographies cover political and military leaders of the Mamlūk empire and beyond, as well as prominent scholars, writers, scientists, and other celebrities. Obviously *al-Manhal* is valuable primarily for information on the author's contemporaries. Curiously, in the light of his reliance on al-Şafadī, Ibn Taghrī Birdī was highly critical of him, berating him as a provincial Syrian litterateur who could not keep track of dates or affairs of state in the capital in Egypt.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Ziyāda, *Al-Muʿarrikhūn*, 19.

⁸⁵ Little, *Introduction*, 108.

Like Ibn Ḥajar and Ibn Taghrī Birdī, the third main biographer of the period was also an annalist. Abū al-Khayr Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī (830–902/1427–97) was the author of continuations of both al-Dhahabī’s and al-Maqrizī’s chronicles. The latter, *al-Tibr al-Masbūk fi Dhayl al-Sulūk* (*Refined Gold as Sequel to [al-Maqrizī’s] Sulūk*), was commissioned by the amīr Yashbak, a leading officer during the reigns of Khushqadam and Qāyṭbāy, but his attempts to provide patronage to al-Sakhāwī were not always successful.⁸⁶ Al-Sakhāwī’s main interest was *ḥadīth*. Like his teacher, Ibn Ḥajar, he wrote numerous books on this subject and taught in various *madrasas* in Cairo. His magnum opus, *al-Ḍaw’ al-Lāmi’ li-Ahl al-Qarn al-Tāsi’* (*Brilliant Light on People of the Ninth Century*), was obviously patterned after Ibn Ḥajar’s biographical dictionary of the previous century. Reflecting al-Sakhāwī’s professional interest, the majority of his 12,000-plus biographies deal with scholars specialized in some aspect of *ḥadīth*, but again, like Ibn Ḥajar, al-Sakhāwī included notables outside the field of scholarship. In any case, Petry deems the *Ḍaw’* to be one of the foremost primary sources for research on the ‘*ulamā*’ of the central Islamic lands in pre-modern times.⁸⁷ While it is true that the work is written in the Muslim biographical tradition, it is distinctly personal in several respects. First of all, al-Sakhāwī saw fit to include a long and detailed account of his own life. This is highly unusual, though helpful to our understanding of the author. Also unusual are his judgments, often negative and sometimes derisory, of the shortcomings of his biographees, including Ibn Taghrī Birdī and the polymath al-Suyūṭī. Even though the acknowledged purpose of recording biographies was to highlight the positive contribution that a person had made to the Muslim community, al-Sakhāwī did not hesitate to berate those who did not meet his standards of accuracy and reliability in transmitting historical data. Justification for this stance is found in his apologetic essay on historiography as a religious science derived from the science of *ḥadīth*: *al-I’lān bi-Ta’bīkh li-Man dhamma Ahl-Ta’rikh* (*The Open Denunciation of the Adverse Critics of Historians*). Finally, *al-Ḍaw’* is unique among the biographical dictionaries of the Ayyubid and Mamlūk periods for the attention it gives to women. It is true that both Ibn Ḥajar and Ibn Taghrībirdī wove the lives of a few female scholars and sultans’ wives into their alphabetized biographies of men, but al-Sakhāwī devoted a final, separate, volume to eminent women of the ninth century. Admittedly, this volume represents only a twelfth of the total work, but this is substantially more space than that normally assigned to women by medieval Muslim biographers.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Ziyāda, *Al-Mu’arrikhūn*, 42–43.

⁸⁷ *El*2, VIII, 882.

⁸⁸ See H. Lutfi, “Al-Sakhāwī’s *Kitāb al-Nisā’* as a Source for the Social and Economic History of Muslim Women during the Fifteenth Century AD,” *The Muslim World*, 71 (1981), 104–24.

A major achievement of medieval Arabic historiography came in the form of *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā fi Ṣinā'at al-Inshā'* (*Dawn for the Benighted Regarding the Chancery Craft*) by Shibāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Qalqashandī (756–821/1355–1418). Despite his education in jurisprudence and his intention of becoming a Shāfi'i judge, al-Qalqashandī became instead a secretary in the chancery during the reign of the first Burjī sultan, Barqūq.⁸⁹ His work in thirteen volumes was designed like those of al-'Umarī and al-Nuwayrī of the Bahrī period as a reference for scribes employed by the chancery and, strictly speaking, was not designed as a historical work at all. Nevertheless, it is invaluable to historians of Fāṭimid, Ayyūbid, and Mamlūk Egypt for the detailed data it contains on the geographical and administrative units of these empires. But the *Ṣubḥ* is indispensable above all for the large number of diplomatic and administrative documents that al-Qalqashandī transcribed and analyzed from the point of view of a chancery official. Since, as noted at the outset, so few documents have survived from medieval archives, these copies are of considerable importance both as substantive sources and as samples for comparison with original Mamlūk documents that have survived in such repositories as Christian monasteries in Jerusalem and the Sinai, the Archives in Cairo, and the Islamic Museum at al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf in Jerusalem.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ *EI*2, IV, 509.

⁹⁰ See Little, "Documents," 9–12.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AI	<i>Annales islamologiques</i>
BEO	<i>Bulletin d'études orientales</i>
BIE	<i>Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte</i>
BIFAO	<i>Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire</i>
BSOAS	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
EI ²	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> , 2nd edition (Leiden, 1960-).
EIR	<i>Encyclopaedia Iranica</i>
EPRO	Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain (Leiden)
IJMES	<i>International Journal of Middle East Studies</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JARCE	<i>Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt</i>
JESHO	<i>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JRAS	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
MESA	Middle East Studies Association of North America (Tucson, AZ)
MIFAO	Mémoires publiés par les membres de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire
MW	<i>The Muslim World</i>
REI	<i>Revue des études islamiques</i>
SI	<i>Studia Islamica</i>
WO	<i>Die Welt des Orients</i>

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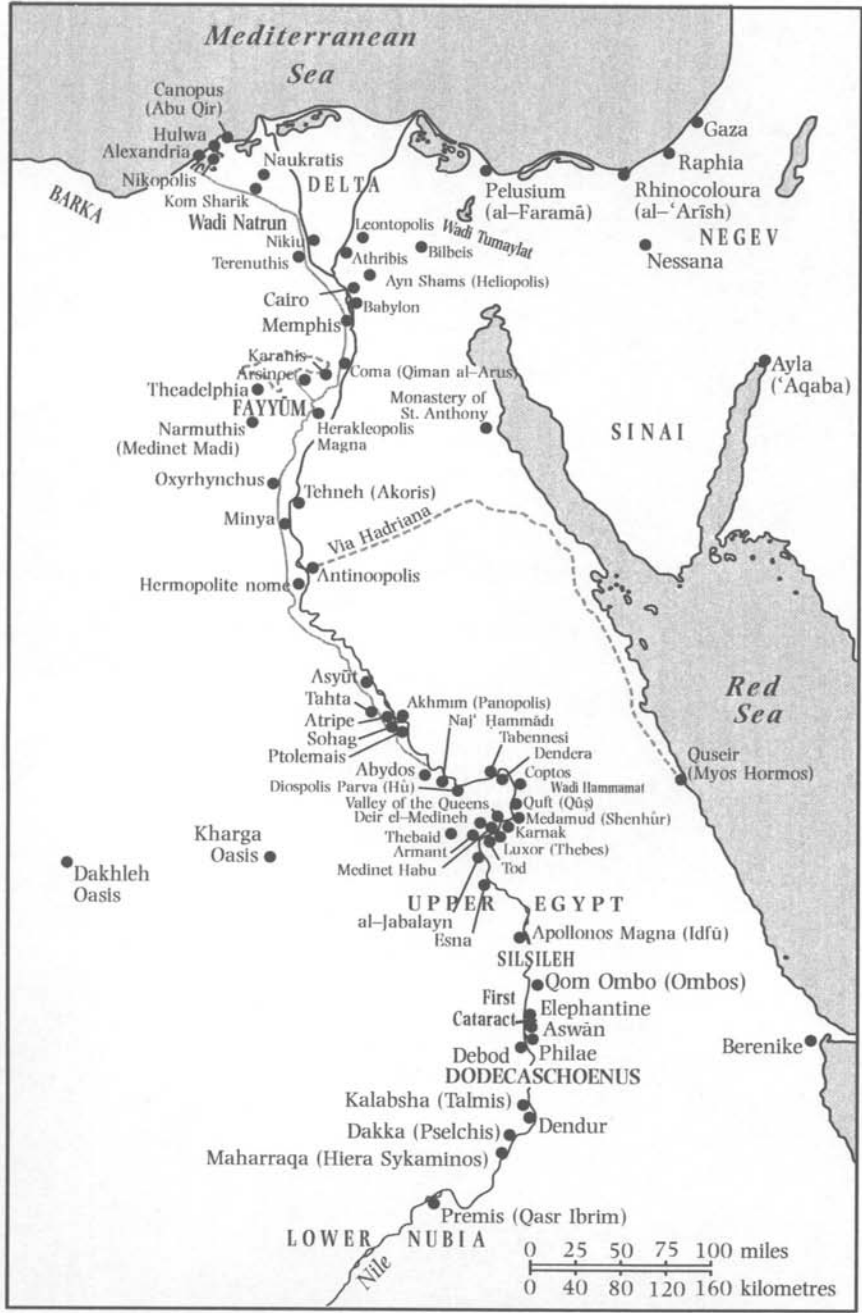
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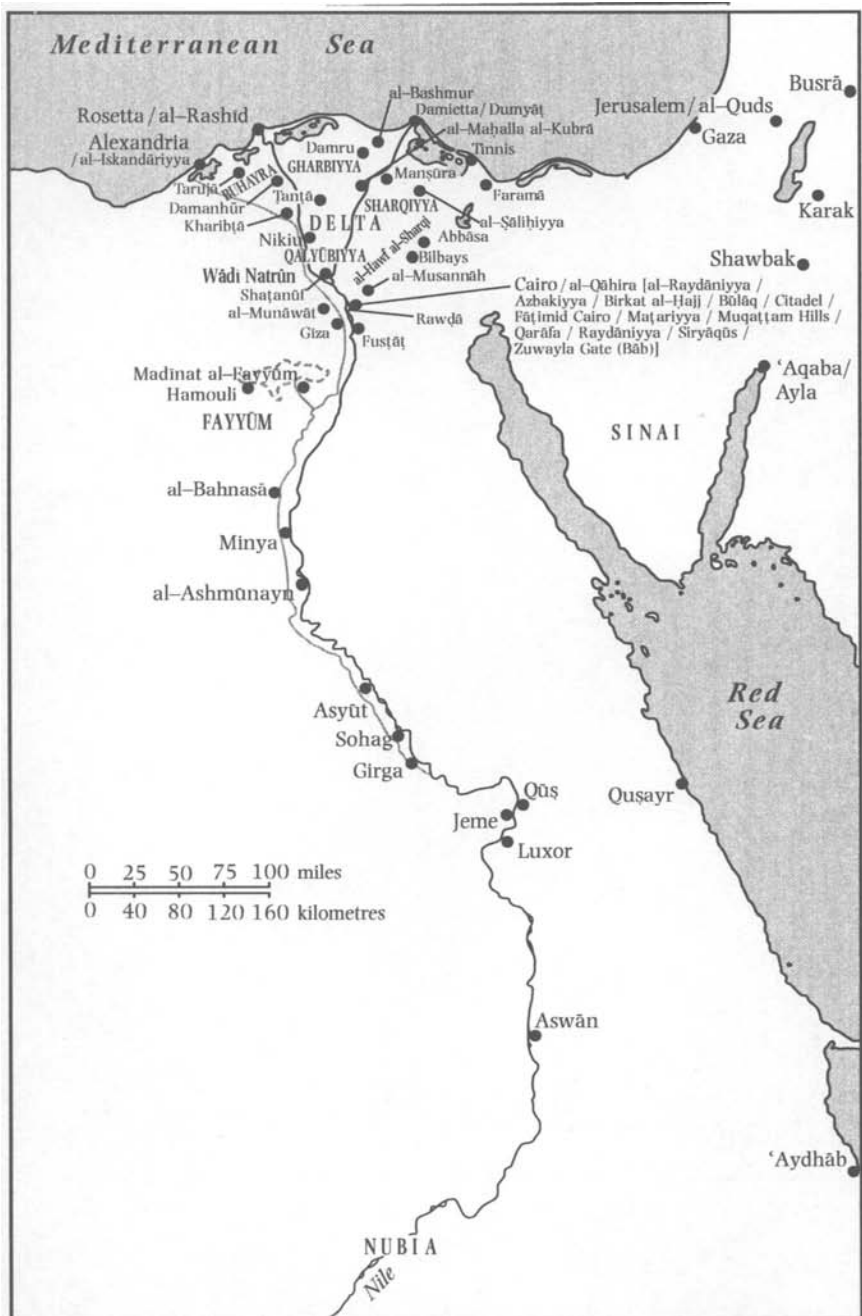
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16 EGYPT IN THE WORLD SYSTEM OF THE LATER MIDDLE AGES

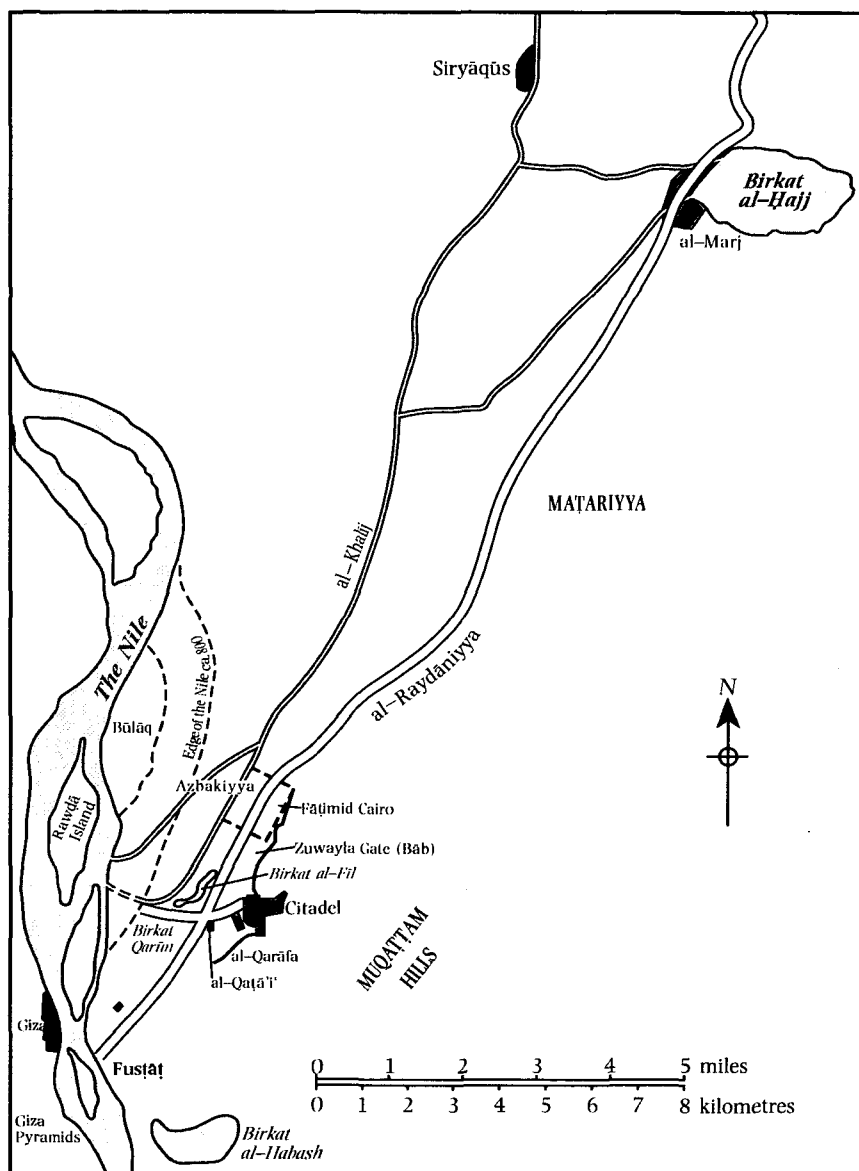
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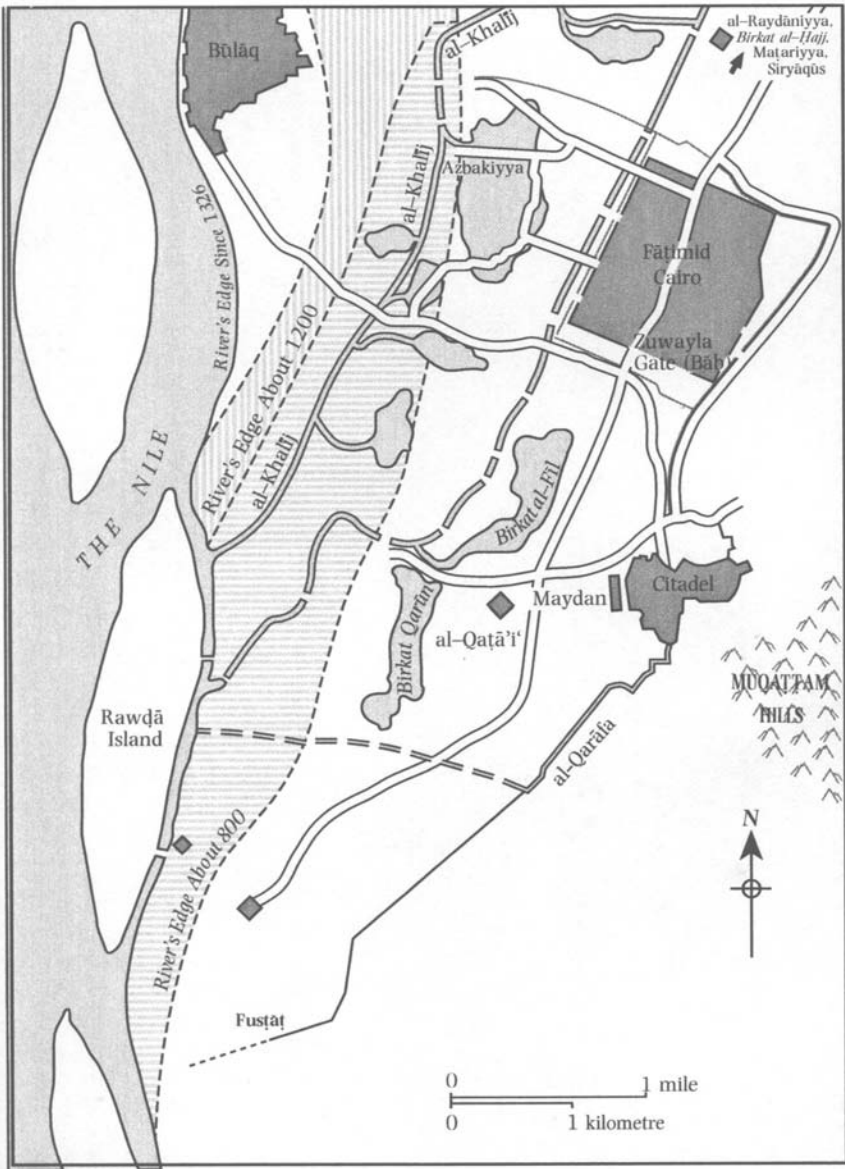
Map 1 Ptolemaic and Byzantine Egypt



Map 2 *Islamic (post-conquest) Egypt*



Map 3 Medieval Cairo environs



Map 4 *Medieval Cairo*